RESEARCH AS VISION QUEST .pdf

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Our interest in asserting the validity of our Indigeneity within academia brought us together at the Annual International Maroon Conference, Jamaica in 2014. Here we recognized our common heritage rooted within the context of colonization and our desire to move beyond the borders of geography in breaking down the hegemonic boundaries of Western education imposed upon us.

Marva McClean, a US based Nanny of the Maroons scholar of Jamaican heritage and, Marcus Waters, a First Nation Kamilaroi scholar from Australia, critically interrogated the inadequacy of academia to facilitate our scholarship and efforts to interrogate the dynamics of exclusion and alienation in claiming our rightful place within academia. Meditating on global matters, we explored themes of Indigeneity and resistance questioning our physical location within our respective continents, where institutionalized racism maintained the hegemonic system of poverty, inequality and educational apartheid among our people; African Americans and Aboriginals respectively.

Initiating the praxis of collaborative inquiry, we acknowledged the need to support and empower each other in interrogating our experiences of discrimination and feelings of complicity in the continuing marginalization of Black children not only in Australia and the United States but indeed, the world. We committed our agency to disrupt the institutionalized barriers we faced in establishing an alternative vision of collegiate and inclusive practice. The scholarly significance of our work, lays in advancing curriculum rooted in Indigenous Knowledge Production, emphasizing the efficacy of intergenerational storytelling recognized as traditional practice and pedagogy.

This commitment to engage in intimate scholarship and decolonize current research methodology was crucial to the self-study that would facilitate the carving out of a third space needed to navigate and renegotiate the positioning of an inclusive Indigenous identity. Self-consciously utilizing third space theories, and critical of current auto-ethnographic writing and critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995) we examined the residual effects of colonization on our lives asserting the need to confront institutional hierarchy and transgenerational trauma (Haebich, 2016) within our communities. We journeyed inward into the liminal space of our heritage as shared spirituality and historical legacy empowered us with the tools to challenge, disrupt and renegotiate the hegemonic construction of the Other (Butler, 2015) as instead a living breathing culture of resistance running parallel and equal to Western practice.

We utilized digital technology to engage the personal experience, Indigenous knowledge, and qualitative research practices as the focus of our inquiry. Moving fluidly from the personal to the local to the global, we interrogated the development
of resistance movements of Black Lives Matter and #SOSBlakAustralia; grassroots movements transcending borders in response to racial injustice across the globe. Both initiatives emphasize how Black communities collaborate and negotiated as co-producers of a text that reframes public storylines to assert their voice against institutionalized racism. Through agency for change they disrupted the imposition of manufactured identities (Bruns, 2008) and became active participants crafting their stories to reveal that people of colour have the capacity to control their own interaction and moderate their contributions (Bruns 2008; Gerhards & Schafer 2010). We juxtaposed our personal stories alongside these international stories of resistance and reaffirmed storytelling as a methodological approach to maintain our authenticity in a non-Indigenous world.

In 2015, we presented the key note address at Bethlehem’s Teachers College graduation ceremony in Jamaica. In the act of presenting at a predominantly Black Teachers college, we recognized that we had accessed liminal space and were engaged in the healing and transformative possibilities of the ancient ritual of traditional storytelling rooted in Aboriginal heritage and Afrocentric traditions. Our life stories connected to Black Lives Matter and #SOSBlakAustralia as pedagogical responses to our alienation within Western academia. This developing scholarship would embrace rather than distract from the multiple realities of the Indigenous communities with which we identify. Accessing this non-linear space, allowed us to engage in narratives of empowerment and position us as legitimate practitioners against institutionalised racist hegemony worldwide.

A significant finding is the power of digital technology to facilitate our collaborative inquiry and extend our scholarship into the Indigenous community (Burrows, 2016). Decentering the research from the personal to the collective (Larsson & Dahlin, 2015) reveals the alternative, contested and shared vision of the enhanced survival and ongoing negotiations of identity for Indigenous people. It is this very cultural capital currently untapped within academia that empowers us with the tools to engage in scholarship on Indigeneity and decolonization within K-20 education and break through the limitations of current institutional research. In our investigation of Indigenous communities including the Maroons of Jamaica and the Aboriginals of Australia and of resistance movements including BlackLivesMatter and #SOSBLAKAustralia, we have unearthed the connection between disenfranchised communities worldwide and the implications this holds for creating a borderless world built on collegiality and inclusive practice.

The results of our collaboration disrupt the narrative of isolation and difference that has characterized our journey. We connect with scholars across a borderless society focused on pedagogies of the historical empowerment of Indigenous people in defiance of any limitations to access the liminal space of our heritage, our personal lives and the communities we represent.
REFERENCES


Dr. Marva McClean
Marva McClean is a teacher- researcher who investigates Indigenous cultures and social justice and equity in education.

Dr. Marcus Waters
Marcus Waters is a Kamilaroi First Nation Aboriginal ceremonial keeper whose research focuses on Kamilaroi epistemologies and trans-generational pedagogy.